



News From

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ZOO'S AFRICAN ELEPHANT NOT PREGNANT, FIRST INSEMINATION EFFORT FAILS

Genny C to Try Again This June

Efforts last fall to inseminate one of Seneca Park Zoo's two female elephants has failed. Hormone levels in Genny C's recent blood tests and examinations via ultrasound confirm that the elephant is not pregnant.

"I am told that the chance of a successful pregnancy in elephants through artificial insemination is 50:50 at best," said Monroe County Executive Jack Doyle. "We are disappointed that this attempt did not succeed but our veterinarians will try again this June."

A team of veterinarians artificially inseminated Genny C, the County's 26-year-old African elephant, on September 19 and 20, 2002 with semen collected from Bulwagi, a male elephant that resides in a Safari Park in West Palm Beach, Florida. While the odds of success are only 50:50, these odds are much improved from only six years ago when the technique always failed due to lack of knowledge of the anatomy and reproductive cycle of females and challenges in semen donation from the male.

"We are very disappointed at the outcome, but are committed to success in this effort and hold hopes it will be different in June," said Larry Sorel, Seneca Park Zoo Director. "These types of conservation efforts are fundamental to our mission at Seneca Park Zoo and zoos across North America."

"Conception in an elephant may only occur over a 48 hour window every three months," said Jeff Wyatt, Seneca Park Zoo's Veterinarian. "As with people, the artificial insemination process is a combination of modern medical technology, exact timing, and a heaping dose of luck."

The first elephant baby conceived by artificial insemination was born at the Dickerson Park Zoo in Missouri in 1999. Since then, others have been born at the National Zoo, Indianapolis Zoo and Vienna Zoo.

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Artificial insemination allows zoos to breed the endangered African elephant making the most of the relatively few males. Only 35 male African elephants (bulls) exist in North America. Less than ten of these bulls are trained to donate semen for artificial insemination of the 211 females nationwide. Twenty five percent of these females are not ovulating. African elephants in North America are a dying breed and vanishing because of an aging female population whose biological clocks are ticking.

“We’ve been anxiously awaiting the news and are saddened that the first attempt was unsuccessful,” said Rachel August, Executive Director of the Seneca Park Zoo Society. “We wholeheartedly support the County’s continuing commitment to nurture and propagate the African elephant species.”

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The Seneca Park Zoo is owned and operated by Monroe County. The Seneca Park Zoo Society is a not-for-profit organization that has, since 1957, provided education, fundraising, special events and public relations support to Monroe County’s Seneca Park Zoo. The zoo is open 364 days each year (closed the first Saturday in June), and is located at 2222 St. Paul Street, ½ mile north of Route 104. For more information on the Seneca Park Zoo Society membership or other programs, please call (585) 467-WILD (9453) or visit our website at www.senecaparkzoo.org.

NOTE TO MEDIA:

Dr. Jeff Wyatt and the Veterinary Team will perform a routine elephant ultrasound examination on Genny C at 1 pm on Tuesday, February 11. Please RSVP to Shaunta Collier-Santos at 336-7201. This procedure is graphic in nature and involves a three minute enema and transrectal ultrasound imaging).

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